

## The history of Cyprus and its geostrategic importance during the Cold War

### A história de Chipre e sua importância geoestratégica durante a Guerra Fria

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**Abstract:** This article aims to analyse, from a historical-military context, the importance of Cyprus in the geopolitical world during the Cold War. Cyprus is a small island located in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, to the south of Turkey and west of Syria and Lebanon. Due to its strategic position between three continents, it was occupied by the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Romans in ancient times. During the Cold War, Cyprus was used as a support base for the actions of the great Occidental powers. The article is based on the author's experience, having worked as a Military Observer and Liaison Officer from September 2012 to July 2013 in Cyprus. It is also based on detailed literature reviews on this topic and official UN documents from the period.

**Key-words:** Cyprus. Cold War. Geopolitics.

**Resumo:** O objetivo do artigo é analisar, de um contexto histórico-militar, a importância do Chipre no mundo geopolítico durante a Guerra Fria. Chipre é uma pequena ilha localizada no Mediterrâneo oriental, ao sul da Turquia e leste de Síria e Líbano. Por sua posição estratégica, entre três continentes ela foi ocupada por fenícios, egípcios, assírios, persas, gregos e romanos na Antiguidade. Durante a Guerra Fria, Chipre foi utilizado como base de apoio para as ações das grandes potências. O artigo é baseado na experiência do autor como Observador Militar e Oficial de Ligação entre 2012 e 2013, no Chipre, em uma revisão bibliográfica detalhada sobre o tópico e em análises documentais e documentos oficiais da ONU referentes ao período.

**Palavras-chave:** Chipre. Guerra Fria. Geopolítica.

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#### Initial considerations

Cyprus is a small island in the Northeast of the Mediterranean Sea, having joined the European Union in 2004. With a total size of 9251 km<sup>2</sup>, it is located 100 km West of Syria, 60 km South of Turkey and about 320 km East of the Greek island of Rhodes. It is 227 km long and 95 km wide. Due to the important strategic location of the island, Cyprus has been part of every empire that controlled the Middle East – Assyria, Persian, Alexander, the Great's Empire, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman and British, spending much of its existence under the dominion of world powers (KOREMENOS, 2006).

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During the Cold War, Cyprus was used as a support base for the actions of the great powers: Britain and the United States (US). The island was vital to the British State, which needed the oil from the Middle East for its reconstruction, as they were losing all of their colonies after the Second World War. The United States had the island as the best place to carry out the monitoring of missiles in the Soviet Union, being able to detect a nuclear missile at the time of launching (MANKOFF, 2012, p. 33).

Looking from a historical-military context, the aim of this article is to analyse the importance of Cyprus in the geopolitical world during the Cold War, highlighting the existence of ethnic groups in-fighting. It is based on the author's experience while working as a Military Observer and Liaison Officer from September 2012 to July 2013 in UNFICYP. It is also based on detailed literature reviews on this topic and official UN documents from the period.

## **1. Cyprus' History**

### **1.1 *Foreign domination in Cyprus***

The island was occupied, in 1571, by the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which remained in its possession for three Centuries, bringing the Turkish minority and laying the foundation for future problems in the island. Being aware of their weaknesses and in an attempt to obtain protection against a possible Russian invasion, the Ottomans left Cyprus to Britain on June 4th, 1878 during the Berlin Congress (TOCCI & KOVZIRIDZE, 2004).

British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli believed that Britain had acquired a place from which the interests of Britain could be secured. However, Cyprus became overshadowed by the acquisition of Egypt, which provided the British Empire with far superior military bases. The island became useless and of no interest to them.

After 1878, the leaders of the Orthodox Church in Cyprus – who were also the most powerful socio-political and economic force in the island – recognised the British State, their new colonial masters, as allies in their quest for *Enosis*, movement of the Greek-Cypriot population to incorporate the island of Cyprus to Greece. The desire that grew within the Greek Cypriot community was a direct result of the 'awareness of belonging to Greek culture and civilisation' (HOLLAND, 1998, p. 35), which was kept alive by the Church over three hundred and seven years of Ottoman rule in the country. The belief that Great Britain would be sympathetic to the desire of Cyprus to join their mother country was linked to the fact that the British supported the Greek independence in the early nineteenth century.

Britain offered Cyprus to Greece in 1915 with the condition that they would become their ally during the First World War. King Constantine, believing in a possible German victory, rejected

the offer (STORRS, 1943). Eight years later, in Article 20 of the Lausanne Treaty, the newly founded Republic of Turkey renounced any claim to sovereignty over Cyprus in favour of Britain and two years later the island was declared a British crown colony. Cyprus was inactive for several years and had little military use during the Second World War.

The confrontation with the colonial regime was initiated by EOKA (*Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston*), a Greek Cypriot guerrilla organisation led by General George Grivas. At the end of 1950, Britain adjusted its imperialist policy and agreed to the independence of the island. The Greek Cypriot leader, Archbishop Makarios III, accepted the independence, instead of the hoped for *Enosis*. Mother countries, Greece and Turkey, were involved diplomatically with the creation of a constitution for the now independent Republic of Cyprus (TOCCI & KOVZIRIDZE, 2004).

### **1.2 The independence and division of the two communities**

The 1960 Constitution was an extremely complicated agreement that failed to unite the government and its people in a united Cypriot nationality. Instead, its elements reinforced the separation of the Greek and Turkish communities. The bicameral structure of the presidential and legislative powers helped accentuate the cultural divisions, setting policies, positions and representations as either Turkish Cypriot or Greek Cypriot (COUFOUDAKIS, 2006). Turkish Cypriots wanted to be recognised as an equal entity next to the Greek Cypriot majority, demanding a corresponding. In order to meet these Constitutional requirements, a Greek Cypriot President and a Turkish Cypriot Vice-President, with the right to veto, were appointed.

In addition, the agreement dictated that the Turkish Cypriots had 30% of all positions in the public service and 40% of the Army. These percentages, however, did not reflect the demographic percentage of Cyprus (LINDLEY, 2007). At the time of independence, in 1960, the Turkish Cypriots consisted of only 20% of the population, while the Greek Cypriots were 80% of the population (TOCCI & KOVZIRIDZE, 2004). The Constitution was therefore designed for the safety of ethnic group's rights rather than individual rights of Cypriots and thus established a constitution prone to deadlocks (LINDLEY, 2007, p. 224).

An important element about the 1960 Constitution involves three important treaties attached to the Agreement: The Treaties of Establishment, Alliance and Guarantee. The Treaty of Establishment created the British Sovereign Bases (SBA), *Episkopi* and *Dhekelia*, which were areas that would remain under British control. The Guarantee Treaty was intended to 'guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security' of the Republic of Cyprus and prevent the two communities from reaching *Enosis* and *Taksim*. The *Taksim* believed that partition was the only

way to ensure that Cyprus would always have a Turkish presence and to prevent assimilation or alleged ethnic cleansing of the Turkish population of the island, due to its population of Greek majority. The key part of this Treaty is Article 4, which states that: 'Each of the three powers are guaranteed the right to take action with the sole purpose of restoring the state of affairs created by this Treaty' (CARMENT, 2006, p. 49). This became critical in 1974, when Turkey used this article to legitimise its military intervention and use of force. The Treaty of Alliance was conceived as a defence agreement to maintain peace and security on the island, allowing the presence of Greek, Turkish and British troops.

The 1960 Constitution brought an end to the anti-colonial struggle, but did not bring a permanent peace to the island. President Makarios was the archbishop and primate of the autocephalous Church of Cyprus, a Greek Orthodox Church (1950–1977), and the first President of the Republic of Cyprus (1960–1974 and 1974–1977). Greek Cypriots were unhappy with the independence agreement since it was externally imposed and was considered a betrayal of the *Enosis* cause, making too generous concessions for the Turkish Cypriots (TOCCI & KOVZIRIDZE, 2004, p. 68).

Turkish Cypriots, led by Vice-President Fazil Kutchuk (1959-1973), were also unhappy with the final agreement and remained concerned about the safety of the existence of their community and their political rights. This dissatisfaction and the structure of the Constitution reinforced the division between the two groups. As a result, the conflict between Turkish and Greek Cypriots continued at a political level with the two communities struggling to create its own police force, army and public service. In addition, these two communities did not agree with the tax division, the limits of the municipality of the Turkish language, or the process of making laws in the legislature (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999).

Makarios began a campaign to build international support for changes to the Cypriot Constitution through visits to non-aligned and Soviet countries. He also invested in the internal support of the Communist Party of Cyprus, *AKEL*, which gained strength in rural areas of the country. With these movements, the US concerns about the Soviet influence in the eastern Mediterranean increased.

On November 30th, 1963, Makarios revealed his proposal to amend the constitution. There would be thirteen points to be changed in the Cypriot Constitution, based on the actual percentage of the population division. Changes included controversial revisions in the armed forces, police and public services; veto removal power of the President and Vice President; and abolition of Turkish municipalities. Turkey, speaking on behalf of the Turkish-Cypriots, rejected the proposals and tensions soared across the island (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999). The Turkish Cypriots left the

government in protest and were grouped in enclaves. On January 1st, 1964, Makarios said that the treaties of Alliance and Guarantee were no longer valid (JAMES, 2002, p. 68).

### **1.3 Increased crisis**

In early February 1963, the situation on the island had deteriorated and clashes between communities increased in intensity. At this time, US people and the British people began to discuss and support the Turkish attempts to separate the two communities (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999, p. 94). US Secretary of State George Ball (1961-1966) and other Washington officials came up with a contingency plan that would 'allow Turkey to invade Cyprus and occupy a large area in the northern part of the island ... to protect the Turkish Cypriots'. This invasion would be carefully controlled, based on the Treaty of Guarantee, which is consistent with the right of Turkey to protect their community.

Similarly, the contingency plan would seek to convince Makarios to accept a Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, made up of troops from the United States and Britain, which would protect the lives of the Turkish minority and avoid an armed confrontation with Greece. In early March (MALLINSON, 2005), the UN agreed to create a UN Peacekeeping Force (UNFICYP) 'to preserve peace and international security' that should 'use its best efforts to avoid the fight and contribute to the maintenance of law and order in an attempt to return the island to normal conditions' (UNSC, 1964). After some important negotiations, the force was made up of British (2750), Canadians (1000), Finnish (1000), Swedish (1000), and Danish (1,000) troops. This mediation was sponsored by the United Nations and was led by Dr. Galo Plaza, former President of Ecuador (JAMES, 2002).

Tensions between the communities continued throughout the Spring, despite the presence of UNFICYP. On June 1st, 1964, Makarios declared that all Greek Cypriots between the ages of eighteen and fifty were summoned to compulsory military service in order to create a new National Guard. Turkey responded with preparations for a large-scale invasion of Cyprus. On June 5th, however, the US President Lyndon Johnson sent the Turkish leader Ismet Inonu a 'brutal' note stating: "I hope you understand that if Turkey takes a step that results in a Soviet intervention, without the full consent and understanding of allies, NATO members may have to consider the obligation to protect Turkey against the Soviet Union"

The letter persuaded Inonu to wait for 24 hours before starting an intervention plan. During this break, agreements were made to start talks between the Greeks and the Turks without the participation of Makarios. The crisis had been averted. Negotiations began between Greeks and Turks, but it was impossible to reach a consensus because of their polarised positions. To make it

worse, in early August, the Greek Cypriot National Guard attacked Turkish Cypriot positions and the island erupted into chaos again. Dean Acheson (1949-1963), US Secretary of State, was frustrated with the lack of agreement and tried to use NATO forces to put pressure on Greece and Turkey. If this tactic failed, the US insisted that the struggle should be confined to the island, not involving American weapons, and not allowing Greece and Turkey to use the violence against each other (STERN, 1977).

The American contingency plan was described as a *fait accompli* and as the only possible way to achieve peace, a statement made in a general meeting with President Johnson (1963-1969) right before the National Security Council meeting on August 19<sup>th</sup>. They argued that the plan was not used in 1964 because of 'concerns about the dangerous turn of events in Vietnam' (BALL, 1982). Thus, the discussion of the 1964 crisis ends with the ominous statement that 'secret plans for dividing Cyprus between Greece and Turkey, by force, if necessary, were left on the shelf for now' (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999, p. 119).

Between 1965 and 1966, Cyprus experienced a period of 'unstable peace' with the intercommunal negotiations slowly progressing. Turkish Cypriots continued to operate their own administration outside the internationally recognised government of Cyprus. The two communities were completely divided and the Green Line, line that divided the two communities in the city of Nicosia, of UNFICYP was porous, where intercommunal incidents could easily increase (CALAME, 2011, p.133).

The political situation on the island worsened with the military coup in Greece on April 21st, 1967. George Papadopoulos (1967-1974), a far-right activist, took over the Greek government, developing an aggressive and nationalist stance regarding Cyprus. The situation of the island intensified again after the Greek Cypriot forces, led by George Grivas, launched attacks on two Turkish Cypriot villages, Ayios Theodoros and Kofinou in November 1967. With the incident, Turkey, once again, mobilised forces to intervene. The US sent Cyrus Vance, US Deputy Secretary of Defence, on a diplomatic mission to convince Turkey to retreat and to avoid war within NATO. Turkey demanded the withdrawal of all Greek forces above the limits set by the Treaty of Alliance, which totalled 10,000 soldiers, as well as the removal of Grivas. Greece agreed and the crisis was averted, at least for the moment.

In January 1966, Secretary Rusk reinforced the United States recommendation that 'at this time, the resumption of the UN active mediation is necessary' (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999). Thus, the US believed that the UN should be the main mediator and *Enosis* would not be a valid option. Turkey, however, did not agree with this assessment and the new Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Caglayangil, demanded a more meaningful US involvement. The Department,

however, responded with a message refusing to endorse significant US involvement. Ball (MoC, 1966) said:

The US government sympathises with those who suffer difficulties as a result of changing conditions on the island,' and, 'The US is following closely and encouraging the UN General Secretary's representative, Ambassador Bernardes, in his efforts to improve the conditions on the island.

The negotiations failed to achieve their aims and violence erupted again in November 1967. On November 17th, President Johnson sent a message to Archbishop Makarios appealing to 'do everything within the power of his government to reduce the threat against peace that is hovering on the region.' He also sent a similar message to Caglayangil, who replied in the following way:

At that time I expected a different message from a country with which we have a common destiny ... I expected that, given this situation, our American friends would come and say that they regret having prevented a Turkish initiative and would say '*Now the decision is yours.*' (DoS, 1967).

Johnson's message did not meet Turkish expectations. The Turks demanded the immediate withdrawal of all Greek troops and the US sent the Secretary of Defence, Cyrus Vance, to negotiate a ceasefire starting November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Rusk, however, sent a telegram to all ambassadors involved stating his concern about friction among NATO members, which stated: 'We do not need to apologize to any governments because of our pressure to maintain peace. Our responsibility is to ensure US national interests' (DoS, 1967).

Husky made it clear that the stability and the prevention of war between the NATO allies was the ultimate goal. Cyrus Vance was able to achieve a cease-fire which involved the removal of all Greek troops from Cyprus. The State Department praised Vance for his efforts and stated that 'without your activity, Turkey would now be at war with Greece.'

The crisis was averted and the ceasefire maintained. In January 1968, the US began to discuss their strategy for Cyprus again. Rusk (1968) recommended that the US provided 'strong support for the mediation of the United Nations [...] a long-term solution'. In the light of these American recommendations, the proposal was presented to a conference between Greece, Turkey, Greek Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriot representatives. The conference would try to discuss a workable constitution for Cyprus.

#### **1.4 The calm before the big crisis**

Richard Nixon (1969-1974), the new US president in 1968, was a fervent anti-communist. He normalised relations with the Greeks and restored military aid to the country. The president and Henry Kissinger (1968-1976), Secretary of State, wanted the removal of Makarios, the Cypriot

President, because to his proximity to the non-aligned countries and the Soviets (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999 p.132).

This period is also notable for the number of attacks against Makarios. The first incident was an attack on his personal helicopter in March 1970, which Stern and Hitchens believed that had the participation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (STERN, 1977, p.71). The Archbishop was able to escape unharmed. In 1972, a group of bishops of the Greek Orthodox Church demanded the resignation of Makarios since it conflicted with his ecclesiastical functions. Two more attempts were made that year. The first was organised by General George Grivas, while the second was a landmine explosion just before his car drove by. These assassination attempts were credited to the Greek Union, by its officers in the Greek Cypriot National Guard.

A month later, in June 1971, Makarios made an eight-day visit to the Soviet Union to gain even more support for the territorial integrity and independence of Cyprus. Meanwhile, General Grivas returned to Cyprus, possibly with the support of the Greek Union and began to reorganise the EOKA forces in a new group called EOKA-B. US concerns about communist influence on Cyprus were already strong, but reached its peak in early 1972, when Makarios acquired a significant amount of Czechoslovakian weapons for its police force (HITCHENS, 2002).

O'Malley and Craig (1999) argue that the British State was not cooperating with the US on its facilities, particularly during the Yom Kippur War. In fact, the British supposedly denied the use of the airfield at Akrotiri by the US, in order to support the Israelis. In addition, O'Malley and Craig (1999) argue that the British wanted to remove all military forces from Cyprus until July 1974, based on the information acquired from a political adviser of the Foreign Secretary: 'Americans could not be sure that Great Britain would let them use the facilities of Cyprus when they most needed.' This allegedly contributed to the US concerns about its strategic interests in Cyprus and convinced them of the need for a military coup in Greece as well as a Turkish invasion of the island to ensure their interests (HITCHENS, 2002).

### ***1.5 The year of 1974 - The Turkish invasion***

The tumultuous year of 1974 began with the death of the legendary EOKA and EOKA-B leader, George Grivas. To further complicate the situation, relations between Turkey and Greece worsened due to problems with oil exploitation rights and territorial control of the Aegean islands. After the series of assassination attempts, on July 1st, Makarios tried to reduce the participation of Greece in the size of the National Guard. The next day, he sent an open letter to the powerless Greek President Phaedon Ghizikis, stating, 'once again I felt ... the invisible hand, extended from Athens, seeking to



destroy my human existence.' Makarios demanded the withdrawal of all Athenian officers in the National Guard (DENKTASH, 1982).

On July 15th, the palace of Makarios, in Nicosia, was attacked by the National Guard. The president was declared dead and a new government was established led by Nicos Sampson. In reality, Makarios had escaped to Paphos, being taken to the SBA in Akrotiri. The Royal Air Force (RAF) took him off the island and flew him to London. Meanwhile, the fighting between forces loyal to Makarios and the National Guard spread across the island. The Turkish Cypriots immediately worried about the security of their community and asked the Turkish support. They responded by sending their leader Bülent Ecevit to London to suggest a combined military answer. The British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, refused and asked for tripartite talks as he sent a British task force to Cyprus. Kissinger sent Joseph Sisco on July 18th as his representative to negotiate between the Greeks and Turkish in an attempt to avoid war within NATO (DENKTASH, 1982).

Turkey invaded the port city of Kyrenia on July 20th, 1974, and took over the road that connected Kyrenia and Nicosia, which allowed them to connect with the Turkish Cypriot enclave in the capital. Atrocities were reported by both sides and the fighting spread throughout the island. At this time, a British task force arrived in Cyprus just to protect their bases and civilians, but not to prevent Turkish military action. The Cyprus crisis had come to a violent climax.

The US took the lead in diplomatic efforts to avoid war. However, O'Malley and Craig (1999) argue that the ceasefire organised by Kissinger prevented the Turkish military from occupying more than just a small portion of the island actually helped them to strengthen their position on the island before starting the second half of the invasion plan. According to Turkish writer Mehmet Ali Birand, Turkish forces had full control over Kyrenia and a passage that connected directly to the Turkish Cypriot quarters of Nicosia (BIRAND, 1985).

On July 23rd, 1974, Nicos Sampson resigned his position as president of Cyprus and Glafkos Clerides took his place. Clashes continued in Nicosia along the 'Green Line' established by the UN that divided the two communities. Regardless of the conflict, negotiations between Greek, Turkish and British States began on July 25th. The US sent the State Secretary Deputy for International Affairs, William Buffum, as the personal representative of Kissinger. O'Malley and Craig (1999) criticise Buffum and Kissinger for his 'extraordinary failure to criticise the Turkish action' (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999, p. 201). Negotiations continuously failed. Kissinger, through long-distance calls, managed to intermediate an agreement that called for the withdrawal of Turkish troops, a standstill in the fight and the creation of a United Nations buffer zone.

The second round of negotiations was scheduled again for early August. Tensions continued due to the continuous movement of Turkish troops and Makarios, even in exile, did not accept any

division of the island. Meanwhile, Nixon resigned on August 9th to avoid impeachment over the Watergate scandal that was happening in the United States and Gerald R. Ford became president. Kissinger remained with the new administration and this time sent Arthur Hartman Geneva as his representative and as a US observer (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999, p. 201).

Negotiations did not advance because of frequent demands from the Turkish Foreign Minister, Turan Gunesh (1977), for an immediate agreement, based on a possible partition and rumours of Turkish plans for a second invasion. O'Malley and Craig (1999) argue that Kissinger denied the likelihood of a second invasion and 'made it clear that the United States was satisfied with guarantees from Ecevit of military restraint' (HITCHENS, 2002, p. 97). The US prevented the British from moving militarily and prevented Turkish military control over the territory.

Despite the negotiations, the Turkish plans to divide the island continued. Talks collapsed on August 13th and 14th when the Turkish forces began to move. O'Malley and Craig (1999) argue that Kissinger aggravated the situation when he said 'the position of the Turkish community in Cyprus requires considerable improvement and protection. We support a greater degree of autonomy for them' (KYLE, 1983, p.83).

Ultimately, Greece had no strength to counter the Turkish operation. The Turks continued to advance to occupy almost 1/3 of the island, covering all its northern part. According to O'Malley and Craig (1999), the US influenced the Turkish troops movement to up to a certain area, showing how much the US was able to help and support the movement of Turkish troops. They also state that the collapse of the negotiations happened because of Kissinger's support on Turkish goals and his refusal to further dissuade the British military on the island. The 1964 Plan developed by Acheson was achieved, through Kissinger's actions in 1974, reaching the desired partition of the island and protection for installations and US interests on the island.

## **2. The strategic importance of Cyprus during the Cold War**

### **2.1 *Acheson Plan***

Before detailing the importance of Cyprus during the Cold War, it is important to discuss the Plan in which the US sought to assert their interests, called the Acheson Plan. On June 19th, the CIA concluded that, due to the mutual hostility between the two Cypriot communities, a solution based on cooperation between them should be excluded. This left the partition of the island or the annexation to Greece (compensating Turkey with a military base), as the only two possibilities that could be imposed to the Cypriots with the support of Greece and Turkey (DoS, 1967).

Fundamentally, CIA added that both solutions should ensure the maintenance of British bases and US facilities on the island. A previous CIA report expressed concerns about the security

of US facilities in Cyprus, which included the checkpoint for communications with the Middle East CIA, operating under the guise of a radio relay station of the Department of State.

Some historians, as Nicolet (2001), support the belief that the US favoured partition as a solution. The historian Claude Nicolet (2001) states that the main idea was that the island would have been divided in 1960 between the Republic of Cyprus and the United Kingdom (NICOLET, 2001, p. 293). For geopolitical reasons, Washington valued its alliance with Ankara and saw the Turkish Cypriots as victims, which meant that some kind of compromise had to be made to Turkey.

Based on these considerations, Dean Acheson (1949-1953), former US Secretary of State and author of the Truman Doctrine, formulated various 'solutions' to the crisis in Cyprus that, amongst other things, ensured the political neutralisation of Makarios and

[b]y dividing the island between the Greek and Turkish, non-aligned and possible communist influences would be removed from there and thus from entering the NATO sphere. Britain would keep its bases and the US communication stations (NARA, 1964).

Washington's mindset had dramatically changed. The US believed that the worst scenario would be a unitary state, as it would mean Makarios achieving a state supported by Russia and Egypt, that would quickly fall under the influence of the already powerful Communist Party of Cyprus.

Acheson was careful to not produce concrete plans in written form, leaving room for some deliberately ambiguous questions. Consequently, it is impossible to define precisely what his real intentions were. Essentially, however, the Acheson plans were based on the premise that most of the island would be joined with Greece, giving Turkey a military base. Negotiations collapsed when the essence of the first Acheson Plan was published by the Greek newspaper Vima, stating that Athens intended to reject the plan that eventually ended up also being rejected by Turkey.

Meanwhile, the intercommunal violence erupted on the island, when the Greek Cypriot forces attacked the Turkish-Cypriot community area of Kokkina and Mansoura, in the north-western part of the island. A few days later, the Foreign Minister, Spyros Kyprianou informed the US Embassy in Cyprus that, because of another Turkish threat, Nicosia had requested aid from Moscow.

In early 1964, US policy-makers had developed a similar plan in which Turkey would be allowed to invade the Karpas peninsula to trigger a Greek response, resulting in an *Enosis* with concessions to Turkey. The Plan was only to be used if Ankara did not give up using military force. Once it became clear that Turkey would take military measures, the US ambassador to Turkey informed the Turkish president that he could pursue a 'movement carefully controlled' rather than a military invasion on a large scale. The reasons for this would be to avoid a Greek retaliation,

avoiding a war within NATO and to convince international opinion that Turkey had invoked their rights under the Guarantee Treaty.

Washington tried to delay the Turks for as long as possible. Since they could no longer delay a Turkish military operation, Ankara would have to be informed of the predetermined areas that they could invade in order to avoid conflict with the Greeks. It has been suggested that Turkey should '[...] land in Kyrenia, keeping a line connecting Lefka and the northern half of the walled city of Nicosia'.

It was reported to the British Embassy in Washington that President Johnson believed that, based on past events in Cuba, Russian technicians were about to install bases of surface-to-air missiles in Cyprus. Acheson recommended that Washington should stop trying to promote Greek-Turkish agreement in Cyprus and focus US policy to prevent the island from becoming another Cuba. Many in Washington believed that Makarios would be the 'Castro of the Mediterranean'.

## ***2.2 Cyprus and its importance during the Cold War***

Being close to Africa, Europe, Asia and to the main navigation axes of the Mediterranean made Cyprus a strategically well positioned island and, thus, highly valuable during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the end of the Second World War and early Cold War, the importance of the island became more evident looking from a global perspective. In this period, oil became very important to Western Europe and to the US, making them dependent on this primarily Middle Eastern product. Britain, financially shaken, needed oil for the country's reconstruction and maintenance of its national interests (MANKOFF, 2012).

British troops left Palestine and the crisis in the Suez Canal, in 1948, when Cyprus became the new British Headquarters in the Middle East, making it strategically vital to British interests. In addition, there was a very real threat of a communist takeover in Greece and the possibility of a Soviet invasion of Cyprus has further increased the importance of the island (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999, p.140-141).

As already mentioned, the strategic importance of the island to Britain grew with time until Cyprus became a key player for the British Foreign Policy in the Middle East, influenced by the British interest 'in the Middle East's commercial routes and the commitments of the Commonwealth in the Suez Canal' (STEPHENS, 1966, p. 3). During this period, the British economy was in decline and the reduction of military presence around the world, by the orders of Prime Minister Harold Wilson (1964-1970), angered American leaders. This included the announcement, in 1966, that Britain was reducing its forces in Cyprus, Malta, Guyana and other areas of Southeast Asia, such as Singapore and Malaysia (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999 p. 123-4).

According to O'Malley and Craig (1999), this 'marked the beginning of the end of Britain's role as a military power in the world and warned Americans to the prospect that one day they could lose the use of Cyprus based facilities' (FOLEY, 1964, p. 87). The US concern was compounded by the new Middle East crisis, which included the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Nasser and the Arab-Israeli Six Day War. The authors argue that the loss of the Canal and the Middle Eastern oil led to an increase in the British economic crisis and a cut of more than 150,000 militaries and civilians, which again infuriated the Americans (O'MALLEY & CRAIG, 1999, p. 124).

Being a major military power in the post-war period, the US had major concerns about the future of the island. Makarios' association with the Soviets led to a concern of a communist takeover on the island due to the British weakening in the region. Americans did not want a new Cuba in one of the most complex areas of the world.

These concerns were motivated by the island's value as a military and intelligence base in the eastern Mediterranean. The US maintained communications facilities on the island, being valuable sources of intelligence during the Cold War. In addition, Britain held, within the nuclear deterrent, as part of the commitment of CENTO<sup>2</sup>, four squadrons of medium bombers on the island. Cyprus was crucial to support them and the effective use of air routes. Without Cyprus, the British would have had great difficulty in enhancing air routes and would lose the ability to strengthen the Suez Canal, becoming vulnerable to political constraints.

The fact that Greece and Turkey had become NATO members made the situation more complicated. Cyprus became of interest to the US in this strategically important part of the world. The reality of the Cypriot communities acquired secondary importance due to the geopolitical interests of Britain and the United States. They could not conceive that any conflict between Greece and Turkey would weaken the southwest flank of NATO.

An agreement was reached, in 1968, allowing the US to use communications facilities on the island. They claim that CIA was also allowed to establish their own radio monitors in the SBA and to build antennas for the US intelligence agencies network. In Cyprus, there were surveillance and intelligence facilities that contributed to the US and NATO's assessments, helping to reduce Russia's Navy and Air Force's freedom of action. The importance of the facilities was so big that it needed the SBA for their protection. O'Malley and Craig (1999) argue that the US had abandoned

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<sup>2</sup> The Organization of the Central Treaty (Central Treaty Organization), also known as the Baghdad Pact, a military alliance was founded in 1955 by Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and the United Kingdom, and scrapped in 1976. It had intended to avoid a Soviet expansion based on Keenan Containment Policy and the Theories of fimbriae Spykman.

the concept of Independence Guaranteed for a united Cyprus and accepted the fact that, at any time later, Turkey could be allowed to occupy part of the island. The US had clear goals for the island:

A politically stable Cyprus, linking Greece, Turkey and the UK, in a relationship of cooperation, willing to and being able to resist Communist subversion and continuing to be available to the West of the British military installations in Cyprus

The maintenance of unimpeded communication media was of vital importance to the US, that operated four communication centres, one in their own American Embassy, two on each side of Nicosia, at Yerolakkos and Mia Milea, and the Broadcast Information Service that housed the main CIA's listening post in the Middle East, on the North coast of Cyprus.

### **Final considerations**

After the occupation of Turkey, in 1974, the southern part of the island remained under Greek Cypriot control, it is recognised internationally as the Republic of Cyprus. Around 20,000 Greek Cypriots left the area under Turkish control, which is equivalent to 40% of the island in the North, and about 50,000 Turkish Cypriots left the South to take asylum in this area. From the mid-1980s, talks about reunification started, although they have never been successful.

More than 50 years after the invasion of the island, talks for reunification continued. In November 1983, Turks unilaterally proclaimed 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus', in the area they had occupied in 1974. This 'new' country is not recognised by the international community and is considered invalid by the UN Security Council.

Since 2001, the heads of the communities reached an agreement on restarting peace conversations. In April 2004, there was a referendum on a plan presented by the UN for reunification of the island (Annan Plan). The proposal was rejected by 75.8% of the Greek Cypriots because they felt that the plan arbitrarily incorporated many demands of Turkey. The plan was not balanced and did not meet their main concerns about security, operation and viability of the solution.

After the elections on March 21st, 2008, New Greek Cypriot president, Dimitris Christofias (2008-2013), and Turkish Cypriot leader, Mehmet Ali Talat (2005-2010), agreed to start negotiations and decided to open a point of communication between the two parties in Ledra Street in central Nicosia, the capital.

On May 1st 2004, the Republic of Cyprus became a full member of the European Union (EU). The adhesion to the EU was a natural choice for Cyprus, dictated not only by its culture, civilisation and history, but also for its European outlook and support to the ideals of democracy, freedom and justice. European Union Law and regulations applications are suspended in the area

under Turkish military occupation, pending on the solution of the problem of the island's division. However, the Cypriot government, in cooperation with the European Union, has been promoting arrangements to facilitate economic transactions between the two communities and to improve Turkish Cypriots' lifestyle.

Even after the end of the Cold War, Cyprus has not lost its strategic importance within global geopolitics. The United States and Britain continue to use its strategic location as a base to support their actions in the Middle East. Air surveillance, refuelling missions and air strikes in the Gulf War of 1990, in the Libyan War of 2011 and, more recently, in the war against ISIS in Syria, had its starting point Cyprus. The SBAs are being used to transmit intelligence to the Syrian rebels using AWACS aircraft.

Russia has sought bilateral agreements with Cyprus in order to militarily use, the ports and airports in the island. In early 2015, Russia and Cyprus announced the signing of ten agreements on cooperation programs in science, education, scientific studies and technologies, along with cooperation programs to combat drug trafficking and terrorism. There were also two military cooperation agreements for defence and naval operations, which caused a public complaint by the US and British States. Russia wanted access to a Mediterranean port and a nearby presence to the British Bases (MANKOFF, 2012, p. 33).

It's important to remember that Turkey wants to join the European Union. The occupation of part of Cyprus by the Turks has a direct impact on their access to the EU, bringing more attention to the situation of the island. The dispute over Cyprus has made the EU freeze the talks, and that no chapter can be closed until a resolution has been found.

The European Commission refuses to start negotiations for Turkey's adhesion to the EU, citing, among other things, that the conflict with Cyprus should be the first problem to be resolved before starting negotiations. This is a serious problem and a difficult one to solve, but the solution is a requirement for the process of Turkish accession to the EEC to take place. In the words of Jack Straw, former British Foreign Minister, it is impossible to not recognise another member within the European Union, leaving limited options for the Turks (UK, 2004). Also, the Cypriot Government threatens to veto any talks and Turkish requests to the EU if they do not officially recognise the Republic of Cyprus.

Another factor that increases the importance of Cyprus in the post-Cold War period is the confirmation of existing large gas fields in its territorial waters, opening the door to self-sufficient energy and possibly becoming a supplier for the European Union. In this respect, the Cypriot government, which signed an agreement, in 2010, with Israel, to establish the demarcation of the maritime boundary and exclusive economic zones of both States, does not exclude the possibility of

collaborating in the energy sector with the neighbouring country. Turkey does not recognise the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus because of the island's partition, and it opposes any negotiation on natural gas found while the situation of the island remains undefined, threatening to send warships to Cyprus if they continue navigating in the area. Finally, this small, yet internationally coveted island has become a regional business Centre of increasing importance and an international Centre of communications and transportation.

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